



Indianapolis

Gregory A. Ballard, Mayor

APRIL 16, 2012

170 EMPLOYEES. \$17M ANNUAL BUDGET. ZERO TAX DOLLARS USED.

Department of Code Enforcement provides essential services, costs taxpayers nothing to operate

INDIANAPOLIS – The Department of Code Enforcement, or DCE, may seem utterly bureaucratic to the public it serves. Its name doesn't necessarily engender warm feelings when seen emblazoned on the side of a city fleet vehicle. But there's no need to grumble about tax dollars and how they are used when it comes to DCE.

Why? This City agency comprises 170 employees who are responsible for everything from controlling high weeds and grass in neighborhoods to protecting the public from predatory towing practices. It operates under an annual budget of roughly \$17 million. And it costs taxpayers ZERO dollars.

In January 2010 under the direction of Indianapolis Mayor Greg Ballard, a streamlined DCE was created by removing code enforcement functions from multiple city departments and combining them under one roof. This new agency was created as a fully fee-supported department, funded through license, permit, and compliance fees. In essence, the services and compliance costs lie solely upon the user who creates the specific need – and removes the financial burden from the taxpayers of our city. Duplication of services, delays caused by inter-department conversations, and program areas balanced on the backs of taxpayers became things of the past.

In DCE, the user of a service pays for that service, and each dollar collected must be spent on the service provided. In addition, every department program operates under performance measures to identify efficiencies and track progress.

DCE worked with an actuarial firm to assess and allocate costs for services being provided, which means more equity, transparency and accountability.

"The City's newest agency has answered the call to step up enforcement actions and tackle issues that threaten public safety and the overall health of our neighborhoods," said Mayor Greg Ballard. "Overgrown weeds, abandoned cars, unsafe buildings, and other property maintenance conditions attract crime, reduce property values, and make communities less desirable. Focusing resources on these issues will better equip us to keep our city clean, safe, and vibrant, all while using a funding model that will not burden taxpayers."

Now, when a taxi company needs a license, the taxi company pays the full amount associated with the license. Previously, the license cost more to administer than the associated fee, and that meant taxpayers subsidized the remainder. This was true of nearly every enforcement function throughout city government.

And because the core functions that make up DCE are now housed under one roof, for the first time in the city's history Indianapolis has a centralized enforcement arm. DCE performs random sweeps of business types that require a license to ensure businesses are operating as good corporate citizens and to protect the quality of life in the neighborhoods where these businesses operate.

Effective business licensing can make a big difference to the health of a neighborhood. The Indy East Motel, for example, incurred more than 900 police runs and over half a million dollars in taxpayer resources before being shut down. Because DCE licenses hotels and motels and has an enforcement arm, the City can address this type of public nuisance that is a haven for criminal activity with a suspension or revocation of the business license.

So what else do taxpayers get for their \$0 investment? Better service. In 2011, its third year of operating the program, DCE's High Weeds and Grass function completed more than 12,000 mows – nearly six times as many mows as in 2008 when it acquired the program.

The fully integrated department now successfully manages the following areas:

- Business licensing and compliance for 25 different business types, including massage parlors, scrap metal dealers, taxicabs, adult entertainment businesses, tow businesses, kennels, and pawn brokers.
- Online, user-friendly services for structural permit plan review, contractor license renewals, Right-of-Way use and excavation permits, public information research, and an electronic document archive.
- Taxicab compliance
- Pre-permit plan review
- High Weeds and Grass
- Special event permits

Beyond just a success story, DCE now is an efficient, consumer-focused agency for businesses and residents. The City removed the bureaucratic two-step people used to face when seeking something as simple as a home renovation permit and replaced it with a model that is working to improve quality of life for residents throughout the city.

The department's programs and employees exemplify high quality of service, and they represent a stellar return on investment for taxpayers.

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